



# The Insider

## The Official IPSF E-Bulletin



### A Message from the Director, Dr. Ronnie Miller:

Another academic year has begun, bringing us new challenges, responsibilities, and opportunities to grow personally and professionally.

### Contents:

1. Message from Director
2. IPSF Bulletin Review
3. Article Summaries
4. IPSF Meeting Details

IPSF is at a very exciting point in its continued growth and development. More than 20 of our member schools are now engaged in the process leading toward accreditation with AdvancED. Additionally, we now have members exploring the benefits of pursuing STEM certification. To support both of these, there will be two exciting days of information-sharing on these topics; October 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup>. Be sure to check out the upcoming events section of our website to find out more.

The executive continues to seek member input regarding our next steps as we pursue MOE clarification pertaining to the regulations governing students seeking to transfer from a publicly funded high-school credit course to a private high-school offering that same course. At this point we are communicating with the office of the Assistant Deputy Minister of Education and hoping to receive a clear response in the near future. This is a very significant query, impacting large numbers of Ontario parents and their children, and, of course, impacting the business practice of many private schools.

There are many topics of interest that member schools wish to explore together. We're starting off our first breakfast meeting with one such topic; we have a representative from the Ontario Human Rights Council who will be presenting to us around issues that could impact private schools. Don't miss this exciting opportunity to learn more about this important subject.

### Upcoming Events

#### Next IPSF Meeting

The next meeting of the 2017/18 IPSF membership will be held on September 24, 2018

See back page for address and details

**A Message from the Director, Dr. Ronnie Miller, cont'd:**

The IPSF survey which was distributed last school year will be very helpful as we consider future initiatives. Thank you to Mr. Jason Krell of The Study in organizing the survey and analyzing the results for us.

We're going to be updating our website in the near future, as well as striking a working group to explore the development of bylaws to ensure transparency and consistency in IPSF decision-making. Keep your ears open for this and other important committee work in the near future. This is a great way to contribute to IPSF, while simultaneously networking with other private school owners and principals.

Looking forward to seeing you all soon and having a productive and exciting year together.

Respectfully,

*Ronnie Miller, M.Ed.; Ph.D.*

*IPSF Executive Director*

## *IPSF Bulletin Survey Review*

As a growing organization, IPSF has prioritized continuity and member input in forward-planning. The end of the 2017-18 school year marked the first membership-wide open solicitation for feedback and prospective value-added activities and topics. IPSF members participated in a multi-question survey asking them why they joined IPSF, what components of IPSF have provided the highest value to their school, what their wishes are in growing the organization, and what role they wish to play as IPSF evolves.

Most member schools identified a variety of reasons for joining IPSF including (most prominently) participating in ongoing professional development, capacity building, and connecting with other educators, owners, and school administrators. Further, members strongly support that IPSF has delivered in meeting the objectives of its members. Breakfast meetings, particularly featuring outside guests such as lawyers and government representatives, are seen as the highest value activities for members. Two camps of members exist in forward-looking. The first group has prioritized teacher-centric development directed at the classroom (e.g., repositories for assessments, course content, and resources) and the second group has prioritized school-level initiatives including more frequent access to professional services, a greater emphasis on educational law, and a dedicated approach to inter-school collaborative activities.

Together, the IPSF membership has shown a diversity of interests but remains united in their commitment and enthusiasm in attending breakfast meetings and joining special project committees to help grow the organization.

Jason Krell, Principal  
The Study Academy

*Thank you to Emina Tihak and Merima Muminovic of Maingate Islamic Academy for their work in summarizing the following articles for our members.*

## **Important Questions to Ask Your Students**

*Adapted from: Author: Maurice J. Elias writing for Edutopia (July, 2018)*

The more we know about our students the more we can help them find answers to important questions, which will allow their energies to be better directed toward building resilience and their continued growth as learners and individuals. At the start of each new school year we should ask our students some simple questions that will give us a better understanding of who they are on a deep level, so that we can be more understanding and supportive. Questions can be adapted for youth of all ages, from preschool to college.

- 1) What helps you feel welcomed?
- 2) How do you like to be greeted?
- 3) What strengths do you bring to the classroom? The school?
- 4) What do you like most about school so far? What would you like to see changed?

More in-depth questions:

- 1) When do you feel competent? How often?
- 2) When do you feel you are being listened to?
- 3) When do you feel your voice is respected?
- 4) When do you feel cared for and about?
- 5) When do you get a chance to be a leader?
- 6) When do you feel most safe/unsafe?
- 7) When do you laugh at school?

Questions throughout the year:

- 1) What is your contribution to the school?
- 2) Who believes you can succeed?
- 3) What happens in school that makes you afraid? Frustrated? Defeated?
- 4) When do you feel challenged and supported?
- 5) What inspires you?
- 6) Who helps you bounce back from setbacks?
- 7) Who is always happy to speak with you?
- 8) When do you feel its ok to make a mistake, or show that you don't know something or how to do something?

In asking the right sort of questions we convey to our students their value and importance. In listening carefully to their answers we as teachers can better support them in their growth throughout the school year.

## **Using Circle/Community Practice in the Classroom**

*Taken from: Author: Mary Davenport, Edutopia, August, 2018*

Inspired by restorative justice (RJ); this is a shift from focusing on consequences to focusing on responsibility and relationships. Circle practice and RJ can be used collaboratively to serve academic, social, emotional, and reflective purposes with our students.

First start with a physical space; set up the circle, for instance you can choose to use a blanket or carpet placed in a corner of the room. You can have your students help decide where to build your community space and what sorts of important criteria should be considered. It can be helpful to have your students think of a local community space, such as a community centre or park, and consider what sorts of things are important to make that a comfortable space for everyone. This can open important conversations on physical accessibility, language needs, etc. Once you have achieved a comfortable space you are ready to explain the 3 basic components of a circle routine: OPENING, PROMPTS and CLOSING.

The opening can consist of a moment of mindfulness, where students and teachers bring their attention to the present and become aware of their feelings and emotions. Students can be encouraged to share their emotional state as part of ongoing classroom support for self-regulation. Icebreaker games can be used to get the conversation going and to foster a sense of safety and belonging in the classroom community.

Prompts allow a circle to serve a specific purpose. Specific questions and topics can be introduced to help build relationships or to tackle issues which have been arising in the classroom, school, school yard, or even the broader community. Rules for respectful listening and responding are very important, as well as the opportunity to pass or even disengage from a topic.

Since circles are so powerful they necessitate closure. Physical movement is often a simple but effective means to close a circle time, or even something as simple as high fives to signal community as well as an upcoming change of pace. The closing offers an opportunity for participants to transition in a healthy way.

## When to Give Your Child a Smartphone

Taken from: Author: Jill Anderson, Harvard Graduate School of Education  
(Useable Knowledge), February, 2018

The decision on when to give a child a smartphone can be a difficult one for parents. Psychologist Catherine Steiner-Adair says the real question is not about the “right” age or about the phone itself but whether a child is developmentally ready to have “full access to the adult world”, and whether or not the child has the groundwork to prepare them for healthy and responsible device use.

Some schools might want to share these ideas with their parent community. It’s a good idea to pursue this as a whole school project, rather than a project taken on by an individual teacher.

Some ideas for parents to consider when deciding whether or not a child is ready for a smartphone:

- 1) Consider your family values; what is important to you as a family? Are you a family that values technology and its innovative and connective powers? Do you value teaching empathy and kindness?
- 2) Talk about technology with your child. Make sure they understand how teachers, friends and even you use it. Are there specific games your child likes? Talk about the feelings your child has after he/she has played these games.
- 3) Know your options; many companies are creating devices specifically tailored with children in mind; that provide parents some ability to monitor or control the technology. Instead of opting for the fully-loaded phone, considering a lesser model that can provide developmentally appropriate privileges such as being able to contact parents and some approved friends or play pre-approved apps.
- 4) Be savvy; most of the things that can be done on a smartphone can also be done through I pads, laptops etc.
- 5) Understand how your child’s school uses devices and technology; communicating often with teachers about how the school uses devices will support parents in making technology decisions.
- 6) Model behaviours you want to see; it’s hard to tell your child to eat vegetables if you never do. Same goes for your smartphone, is it appropriate to use a phone during dinner time?
- 7) Stop texting your child all the time; apart from being disruptive this can cause anxiety and miscommunication and be misconstrued as putting pressure on your child or as lack of trust in your child.
- 8) Cater the rules to each child and allow the rules to evolve as your child ages; while it seems that all children are using devices there are plenty that are not. Remember to keep track of your child’s feelings after using the device. These devices are tools and should only be used if they are improving our lives, and this is especially true for our children.

## How to Provide Help

*Taken from: Author: Leah Shafer, Harvard Graduate School of Education (Useable Knowledge), August, 2018*

Although teachers want to provide help in a way that develops students' self awareness and self efficacy sometimes it is difficult, particularly since most teachers from preK-12 have at least 20 students in their class.

A solution to this dilemmas is for educators to weave "help" into the fabric of their classroom; setting up various structures, habits, and routines that allow students to think deeply about and access the support they need.

There are 3 tiers of help: General Help, Specific Help, and Individualized Help.

**General Help** resources are accessible to all students. Help of this support includes everyday items that are already in your classroom, such as information on the walls (which could include student work, achievement goals and success criteria, word lists, number charts, etc.). The idea of this is that all students understand that these resources are readily available, all the time, all around them.

**Specific Help** resources include supports that ensure students will complete the whole task without being hampered by learning challenges. This might include step-by-step instructions on completing the assignment, rubrics, graphic organizers, schedules for the assignment, finished work samples, online bibliographies, etc. Scaffolding can also be used. Scaffolding helps students develop one specific skill or part of a task without worrying about all the components. Extensions help push students beyond the task at hand. A separate set of criteria for an assignment can delineate what will make the students' work amazing vs just complete.

**Individual help** acknowledge that each student comes to school with a unique set of experiences and understanding, therefore each need unique assignments. This is separate from an IEP or remedial work, and can also be used to extend learning. Specific "tweaking" of any particular assignment or task is valuable for students at every point on the achievement spectrum. As students realize that every student is "getting what they need" for any given subject or topic, it reduces the stigma that can sometimes be associated with supports being made available and reinforces the idea of equity versus sameness.

## IPSF Meeting Reminder

**Date: September 24, 2018**

**Time: 10:00 AM – 1:00PM**

**Location: 212 Eglinton Avenue East,  
Second Floor Multi-purpose Room**

**Toronto M4P 1K2**



### Contact the Editor

If members have articles, news, events or any other ideas to share and be included in the e-bulletin, please send them for consideration to the editor at [info@ipsf.ca](mailto:info@ipsf.ca)

Please let us know if there are particular topics you would like covered in future bulletins.

Thank you!!